



EMBARGOED RELEASE
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Website: www.mbda.gov/gulf

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MBDA Kicks Off Second Business to Business Linkage Forum in Biloxi, MS

***Minority businesses build joint ventures to get public and
private contracting opportunities to rebuild the Gulf Coast***

WASHINGTON, DC—In rebuilding the Gulf coast, the Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce hosted its second Business-to-Business (B2B) Linkage Forum from July 24th - 25th at the Imperial Hotel in Biloxi, MS.

"Rebuilding the Gulf Coast is a high priority for the President and the Nation," said Ronald N. Langston, MBDA National Director. "The Minority Business Development Agency is encouraging joint ventures and strategic alliances between smaller minority-owned firms in the states of Mississippi and Louisiana to partner with larger minority businesses from across the U.S. to bid on forecasted opportunities to rebuild the Gulf Coast."

In partnership with the Mississippi Development Authority - Minority Business Enterprise Division, Kauffman Foundation - Urban Entrepreneurial Partnership and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), MBDA will provide minority business owners with the opportunity to meet and partner with other minority business enterprises to form joint ventures to bid for more than \$5 billion in public and private contracts in the areas of construction and housing.

"Since Hurricane Katrina, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) has been working tirelessly to support the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the rebuilding process," said Leland Speed, executive director of MDA. "This forum is another resource to help minority businesses compete more effectively in the marketplace."

During the B2B Forum, public and private contracting representatives included Army Corps of Engineers, Northrop Grumman, City of Biloxi, NASA-Stennis Space Center and Veterans Affairs shared information on forecasted procurement opportunities for rebuilding the Gulf Coast. Representatives commented on the many qualified minority businesses who attended that could meet the contract requirements.

"UEP is proud to co-host with MBDA for the B2B forum," said Daryl Williams of the Director of Minority Entrepreneurship for the Kauffman Foundation and National Director of the Urban Entrepreneur Partnership. "The B2B Linkage Forum is a critical component to help the capacity of minority businesses affected by the Katrina and Rita."

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More than 150 minority businesses, who were mostly from the Gulf coast region, participated in the forum had an opportunity to network and develop partnerships during the afternoon sessions.

"It was a great networking experience and gave me an opportunity to meet prime contractors," said Kenny Hunter of Tri-County Contractors in Jackson, MS and a MBDA client. "It was informative and just a good environment for small businesses."

To learn more about the MBDA's Gulf Rebuilding Initiative and the New Opportunities in the Gulf: Creating Business to Business Linkages Forum, visit the website www.mbda.gov/gulf.

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About the Minority Business Development Agency, US Department of Commerce

Founded in 1971 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. MBDA is the only federal agency created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in this Nation. The Agency actively promotes the growth and competitiveness of large, medium and small minority business enterprises by offering management and technical assistance through a network of forty local business centers throughout the United States. Useful statistics on minority businesses and resources to build and sustain minority businesses are available at www.mbda.gov.